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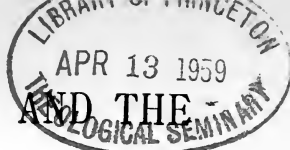
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ST. PAUL AND THE
CHRISTIAN'S TRIUMPH.





ST. PAUL AND THE
CHRISTIAN'S TRIUMPH.

2 COR. ii. 14-16.

BY THE
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WITH A PREFACE
BY THE
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London ;
MARSHALL BROTHERS,
10, PATERNOSTER ROW.

BUTLER & TANNER,
THE SELWOOD PRINTING WORKS,
FROME, AND LONDON.

PREFACE.

My dear Friend, the writer of these chapters gives me leave to preface them with a few words. To do so is a happiness and privilege, if only because it is an opportunity for "setting to the seal" of a brother Christian's earnest testimony to the message here given so thoughtfully, pointedly, and lovingly.

I pray God to convey through this little book a very special word to young men. The writer and I are associated very closely in work at Cambridge for young men and amongst them, and the thought of the untold importance of the winning of young men to an entire

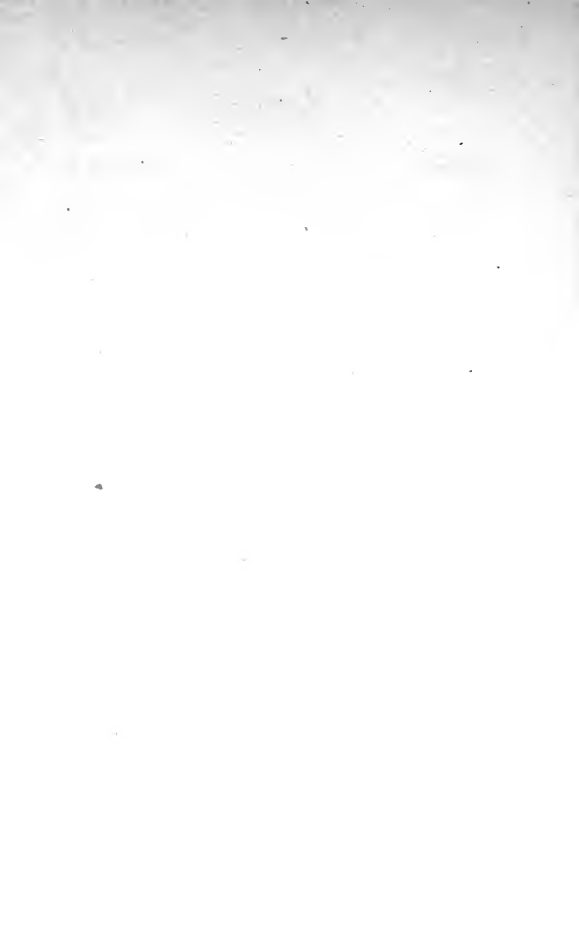
devotion to the Lord, and of building them up in Him, is constantly before us. And my experience tells me that there is no side of truth, after the first blessed message has been received indeed, which so finds out and draws in young men, so leads them into a life which is strong and fruitful for Christ, as this side—this gospel of the Lord's triumph over us, and in us, and through us; this blessed march through life in the train of His captives, who are also then His soldiers, sharing His victory.

So may this little book go forth under His blessing, which alone makes our words, written or spoken, living and life-conveying things. May it be one of the clouds of incense, one of the wafts of "sweet savour," which attend the progress of our Captain along the Sacred Way of His work on earth. And may it be a savour alto-

gether "of life unto life," and never, for any reader, of "death unto death"; till the happy procession ends in the glory above.

H. C. G. MOULE.

Dec. 17, 1889.



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INTRODUCTION.

THE Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians gives us an insight into the inner life of the Apostle more than any other of his writings. It was written, in all probability, shortly after his departure from Ephesus, subsequent to the riot of the silversmiths, and despatched from some town in Macedonia. The Apostle has just passed through a time of peculiar trial. The Church of Corinth had communicated with him more than once during his stay at Ephesus, and these communications were not of an assuring character. Division, strife, and even

immorality had crept in, together with a spirit of self-satisfaction. St. Paul writes the First Epistle, and sends it apparently by Titus. The interval between this and his meeting again with Titus was a time of intense anxiety. He longs for news of the Corinthian Church. He cannot rest. Recalling this time of waiting, he writes later on : "When we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest ; but we were troubled on every side ; without were fightings, within were fears." In no other Epistle do we see the Apostle so torn asunder by conflicting thoughts. He fears the worst, and yet would hope the best. This state of mind is at length put an end to by the coming of Titus with good news. The Corinthians had received him favourably, and were well disposed towards the Apostle himself. On receipt of

this news, St. Paul indites his Second Epistle, and depicts there the anxious state of mind, which had preceded the reception of the news from Titus. We see his past and we see his present feeling. The tone of doubt has given way to one of confidence. The large experience of those months of trial and waiting has produced a rest and repose in Him who had all along been showing him that His grace was "sufficient." The section 2 Corinthians ii. 14-16 reveals to us the Apostle at the moment of transition from sorrow to joy, from a looking to self to a calm confidence in his Master, realizing that He had led him thus far, and would yet lead to further triumphs of grace and victory.



J.

THE CONQUEST OF THE SERVANT.

2 Cor. ii. 14 : "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph (leadeth us in triumph, R.V.) in Christ."

OF all New Testament writers, the man who is most intensely imbued with the sense of his bond-service to his Lord and Master is, without doubt, St. Paul. To see it we have only to take up his Epistles or his speeches as recorded in the Acts, to open at any chapter, almost at any verse : it is here, it is there, it is everywhere. Nor is it only in definite statements that we may expect to find it expressed : it is oftener far to be found in some slight turn of thought, some single

phrase or word, some implicit reference. Such a passage is the one before us now. The thought of bond-service at first sight seems quite alien to the context, and comes upon us unexpectedly. Three main points of view characterize this wonderful passage of three verses, each an advance upon the other, yet each bound together by the link of the servant's relation to his Lord. There is, first of all, the conquest of the servant, the leading in triumph of the captive; then we are shown somewhat of the main purpose of the conquest, the duty and work of the captive; and lastly, in solemn and heart-searching words we are told what the effect of his work must be. Then the section closes with a striking question intended to summon the reader to a sense of his incapacity, yet to point to one

who is the great Supplier of all need and help.

These three points let us take in their order, and may He whose sacred office it is to guide into all truth seal with His mark of approval and of power all that is true and of Himself.

The conquest of the servant.

It is impossible to read St. Paul's writings without feeling that here we have a man who is deeply in touch with everyday life. Here is no dreamy visionary living in a world of impossibilities, no idle theorist more intent upon the proof of his theory than the working of it, no reckless fanatic blind to all the varied lines of life around. No, here is one to whom life is one intense practical reality. Everything that he comes in contact with is observed and noted; nothing seems to escape him. While this is

so, there is something further. All is noted and observed, that some great spiritual truth may be illustrated from the common everyday surroundings and occurrences of life. Is the Apostle brought in contact with the games, the wrestling, or the race? His thoughts fly to the great contest of the Christian, to his wrestling against principalities and powers, the strife against sin, or even the agonizing wrestling of the soul seeking help, in prayer at the footstool of the throne of grace. Or does he pass by the great theatre at Ephesus, and hearken to the shouts of those who gaze in unholy excitement upon the spectacle before them? He seems to see the multitudes of the world gazing on at the spectacle of the Apostle's toil; or, as he thinks of scene giving place to scene in the arena, he recollects that "the fashion

of this world passeth away," and his soul is lit up with the light of things not temporal, but eternal.

And now here is an illustration, the use of which has moulded his expression and teaching, bringing out into the light some of those deep lessons of what the Saviour is and can be to the lost one who has yet been found.

One alteration first in our Authorized Version, which has here obscured the whole metaphor employed. We should read, not "Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ," but "Thanks be unto God, which always *leadeth us in triumph* in Christ."

It is the great scene of the Roman triumph which the Apostle has in view. This was one of the most marvellous sights of that age, its fame reaching throughout the whole world.

The victor, seated in his car, went in triumph through the streets of Rome on his way to the Capitol. Before him, in chains, burning with shame and crushingly conscious of defeat, march the wretched captives, kings, princes, or warriors, once proud and haughty, now reduced by the iron hand of Imperial Rome. Thousands line the streets and thousands more the roofs of the houses, hailing with their acclamations the successful general, or cruelly taunting the poor wretches whom he has overcome. Along the path and at every corner incense is wafted through the air, its fragrant smell bringing delight to joyful and exultant victors, or gloom and foreboding to their conquered captives.

Such is the illustration in the Apostle's mind.

But now, before details, let us ask

what were the circumstances which led to the use of this metaphor by St. Paul? He is at Troas for the second time. Five years—years fraught with much blessing in his Master's cause, and much toil and danger to himself—have passed since he was last there. But now all is different; then, there was the bright anticipation of coming victories, of souls won from the darkness of heathendom to the sunshine of the Gospel; the vision of the man of Macedonia was fresh in his mind; he was about to take possession of unknown lands in his Master's name, by his Master's grace; and now?—now all seems a failure. Tidings have reached him that the Church where he had laboured so long and devotedly and with such success, the Church of Corinth, is in danger of forsaking the truths which he holds so dear.

There are ugly rumours of immorality, of schisms in the bond of Christian fellowship, of parties and of strife, of deadly doctrinal error. Unable to cross over and see for himself, he has sent Titus, with entreaty to bring back news quickly. But day after day passes, and Titus comes not. Can we not picture him climbing some far-seeing height, and gazing out over the *Ægean* Sea, eagerly scanning the water for the sail of the ship which is to bring him joy or sorrow? Or we seem to see him pacing to and fro, while he revolves the chances, the causes, the possibilities of the case, or speculates on the delay of his fellow-labourer.

And all this time, while there are "fightings within," there are also "fears without." There is the case of the growing Church of Troas, the calumnies

of enemies, the opposition of the unfriendly to be overcome ; there are the struggling followers to be cheered and helped ; there is the vast field, ripe for the harvest, of souls to be reaped ; on all hands pressure of work and toil, persecution and annoyance, difficulties and trials. And these are added to the great suspense.

He can bear it no longer, and he sets sail for Europe. What a voyage ! Oh ! the rush of thoughts, the agony of suspense, the crushing sense of possible defeat, of lost labour and ruined souls !

At length comes relief. He has met Titus, and Titus has good news. With what eagerness is it all drunk in ! What questioning as to this convert and that ! what inquiry of such and such a point !

Then as he recalls the past, with its

terrible strain on mind and life, as he recollects his fears, and sees them all, like darkness, scattered by the light, he bursts forth into one great cry of triumph, "Thanks be unto God, which always leadeth us in triumph in Christ."

It is an unlooked-for turn of thought this, and, but for the knowledge of the illustration used, we should fail to see the connection.

As the story of Titus unfolds itself, as the Apostle, looking back, recalls how, through the dark clouds of difficulty and uncertainty, God was yet guiding him to the indicated path, there bursts before his view the glorious scene of the Gospel triumph.

He looks back and marks its progress. There is the first little company of apostles and disciples fresh from their last interview with their

Lord on earth. They are passing along amid the thousands of their countrymen, captives to a mighty Will, a conquering Lord. So it had passed by him twenty years before. And now it has grown an endless procession of young and old, from the Roman patrician to the humble slave, men, boys, women, children, out of every province, almost out of every city. Yes, and he himself is there. Before the chariot of God, in sight of the whole world, the eyes of all men upon him, he is passing along in that grand triumphal march. And ever as it passes, the incense of the word of God is floating on all sides, a "savour of life unto life" or of "death unto death."

Suddenly a new thought strikes him. What is all this procession but the passing by of the body of Christ? So he adds the words, "in Christ." Then,

if this be so, he is part, and the limbs share in the triumph of the head. Christ has conquered, but he is in Him; then the Master's conquest is the slave's as well. Yes! he is himself a victor, though the vanquished one. Conquered that he might sing the victor's song. This is the climax.

* * * *

Now turn with me to the present time, and let us ask, How does God triumph over us?

Look back upon your life; recall the time of wandering. Was there not a time when all that was spiritual seemed foolishness? What was all this procession but folly and excitement? What meant this call to forsake the pleasures of the world? What did the Gospel summons mean? Or it may have been that your life was bounded

only by the pleasures of the moment. The attractions of the moment, the desires of to-day, the things of time—these were your all in all. Here was your life. Or it may have been that some sin bound you tight in its iron fetters, some secret fault, some dire indulgence, and this it was which held you to itself, and crushed out from your life all sense of higher and purer things.

Then came a change; the incense of the word of God was wafted your way, and you realized that there was something immeasurably higher than all which constituted your present life. The struggle followed. To be or not to be. Life for the present, with all its enticing pleasures, or life for eternity, with unknown joys beyond to-day, and a calm and holy peace now. Which?

And as you fought, suddenly the dark clouds, the choking mists, seemed to part asunder before you, and through an opened rift you beheld a marvellous scene. There passed before your gaze the Saviour's life. You saw Him going up and down among men, carrying joy and peace; you heard Him speak—His words riveted you. Scene after scene passed before you, till there came the final one, and you saw your Saviour die, and a voice (it was the Comforter's) whispered, "He dies for you." A moment's suspense. You saw it all. A Saviour for you, a King, a Hope, a present and abiding Lord, and, falling on your knees, you owned a Master, you found a Victor. You were won, and, as you rose, the dark mists rolled away, the Sun of Righteousness poured forth His rays of gladness upon you, and behold, you were walk-

ing, bound in the chains of love, to the Conqueror's car. Defeated ! captive ! Yes, but taken only to triumph ; for, though bound and captive, yet you marched partaker in a glorious victory.

Has this been your case ?

But it is not only in our conversion that God's triumph is seen. It is found also in our consecration. It lies in life's daily round ; in ourselves and in our surroundings.

Are there not known to us hidden depths in our hearts ?—spots so secret that we keep them dark and closed to all save self. Here self reigns. This corner is our own private property. All else is His, to be and to be dealt with as He in His holy will shall see fit to do ; but this—this little spot is ours, to hold and to cherish, to deal with as *we* shall see fit. Let us unlock

the door for an instant and enter. Here is where self carries on business ; the dust of years lies unswept away here ; the breath of the Spirit of God has not blown it away hence. Here is the manufactory from whence springs sorrow. Here are made and produced those little fits of irritability which seize upon us just when something has crossed our will. Hence issues forth that phantom which, when we speak for our Lord, and tell of His joy and peace, rises before us and laughingly mocks us, telling us we are unreal. Yes ! and the want of that calm peace, that quiet rest offered and provided in Him our Lord, is traceable to this small corner. This is the citadel that God would take, and, cleansing out the idols of self and self's concerns, would reign supreme. Dear friend, I have no hesitation in saying that all

want of power in service, of calm rest in the midst of trial or irritation, of longing over souls, of rest and peace, is to be traced to a want of whole-hearted consecration. Something has been kept back—something, it may be, of the past not set right ; some wrong done as yet unrepaired, some cherished possession not laid at His feet. What is it in your case ?

Not only, however, does God triumph over us in ourselves. He reveals His victory to the world in our surroundings. Here we have the picture of a man beset on all hands by difficulties and trials, fightings within, fears without—a time of extreme difficulty, of apparent failure, of seemingly standing alone. Yet out of it, by the grace of his Master, he comes a victor, though vanquished first that he might be victorious. Oh ! how often

we are tempted to say, "If my position, my place, my life were not where it is, how easy it would be to serve my Master. If only I had not to live with such and such a man, and work at such and such a thing, to go to such and such a place, all would be well."

Dear friend, this is not the way of the triumph. The victor's car must pass down just those roads appointed for it, and you must march in the procession along those selfsame paths.

Is it the path of peculiar temptation? is it the road of severe anxiety, of hard toil? then here is the scene of God's victory. It is His path—it must therefore be yours; it is His command, and so there is His promise of power and help, for all His commands are promises. Here, along this very path, He would proclaim to the world what

conquests He has won, that He may be glorified in you.

Such then is the triumph over the servant, and day by day that procession passes in sight of the world around, proclaiming to all the power and might, the triumph of our King. Thus God triumphs over us.

It may be asked, "How do we participate in His triumph?"

To the Apostle, the truest triumph is to be triumphed over; to bear about the marks of the bondservant is to be crowned a victor. To see how this is so, we must go deeper than the mere surface. The triumph is only "in Christ"; that is, as we become members of Him, in union with Him. Here is the element, so to speak, in which the triumph takes place. Outside Christ, nothing: in Him, all. And the entry is by death

—a death unto sin ; the result is life, yea, life unto life. In Him, guilty man's representative, we see infinite merit. Here it is eternally resident, in Him and in Him alone. Were every grain of dust a ruined soul, there were sufficient merit there to meet each case. And so in naked emptiness of soul I come, conscious of the absolute want of any merit whatsoever, and knowing the deep, deep stain of sin and sin's pollution ; to Him I come, and, kneeling there, I ask His merit, and in asking, I become part of Him, my head. He has triumphed, for He has won me ; but I am at once a member of Him, and the triumph of my Head is mine as well. And so to-day the procession of God's triumph passes by, the incense of His word is burnt, the glorious sight is seen of souls won, of self subdued, of

difficulties swept away, of clouds dispersed. Are you part of that great triumphal scene ?

II.

THE PURPOSE OF THE CONQUEST.

2 Cor. ii. 14, 15 : "And maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish."

IN the previous chapter we traced out the first part of the teaching of this passage—the conquest of the servant. We saw the picture of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, at a time of peculiar difficulty and trial; a time, when all things seemed against him, and his life-work appeared to be threatened with failure. From this trying position we saw him emerge a

different man. He had gained an experience which lasted throughout his later years. Never again do we see him torn asunder by the doubts and difficulties around him. Henceforth there is a calmer trust in Him who had said, "My grace is sufficient for thee." There were difficulties and trials yet to face; there were disappointments and discouragements still to come; but the servant has realized his Master's will and his Master's power, and throughout them all he marches triumphantly onward. From the Apostle we turned to our own case, and, looking back, we saw how, in that first glimpse of the Lord as our blessed hope of safety and acceptance, we were first led captive to His will. Then we realized something deeper. All life, with its varied possessions, its varied circumstances, its duties and its toils,

was to be consecrated to His service. This was the conquest of the servant.

But now, before touching on the more special lessons of these two texts, let us briefly trace out in outline the picture drawn from the metaphor employed by St. Paul. He has before him the thought of the great Roman triumph, and it is to him symbolical of the greater triumph of the Gospel. The victor is God in Christ; the vanquished are the followers of that Lord, owned and captive, conquered to His blessed will and purpose. The scene of the triumph is the world, and the procession is to be found wherever the sound of the Gospel call is proclaimed, wherever a band of believers is to be met with. One by one he seems to see them added, swelling the ranks of those whose *all* is no longer their own, but His, their Lord's, to be

dealt with as He sees fit. It is the conquest of the servant.

The Purpose of the Conquest.

We now pass to a fresh thought—the purpose of that conquest. But first a brief explanation. Take up St. Paul's writings and read them, and you will at once be struck with their force of expression. He is, so to speak, carried away. Not for one moment are we to understand this in a bad sense ; no, it is only to be understood of the way in which he expresses himself. To St. Paul the Christian life is a very, very real thing. It is not a thing of the moment, to be taken up for a time and then laid down, again when the inclination comes to be reassumed. There is no part of life where it has not a claim ; there is no position, no state, no path of duty where self has

a right to say, "This is my affair." No; the Apostle's being, his life, his all, with all its varying shades of ill and joy, of rest or rush, are not so peculiar that his Master's grace has nothing to do with them. Is it a time of sorrow, of bereavement? The Lord stands by him to comfort and sustain. Is it trial, difficulty, or temptation? He hears his Master's voice: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness." The result of this keen perception of the continual bearing of the Gospel claim and the Gospel message upon each detail of his daily life is that his thoughts are too quick for words to express them. There is a hidden life in this man, which comes at times to the surface and reveals the workings of his inmost being. His life is like some mighty river. There are the moments

of calm and even flow, when he loves to meditate upon the mysteries of his redemption. But while there are times of even gliding in the stream of life, there are cataracts and rapids too, when thoughts leap and flash before his mind, each following other in quick and rapid succession, so close that one is scarcely thought of ere another has taken its place. His writings reveal this state of mind. He is a man on fire. There is an energy about him which transcends time, so that when he would express his meaning by some illustration, there is often confusion in his metaphors. He passes from thought to thought, from illustration to illustration, so rapidly that he has but half indicated his meaning before he has begun another line of thought, or another lesson.

To see his meaning we have often to

enter into his life, to understand something of the circumstances under which he wrote, of the society in which he found himself, of the work he had in hand, of the difficulties which beset him.

Especially is such a study necessary in considering the teaching of the passage before us.

The Apostle has just been speaking of the internal conquest over mind and will. He sees himself a captive marching amid the clouds of incense, which to him is symbolical of the Gospel proclamation. And now a fresh thought strikes him as he thinks of the glad tidings which that incense suggests. No longer is the thought of his captivity the prominent one; he is now the bearer of the incense. By being vanquished he has become "a preacher and an apostle; . . . a teacher

of the Gentiles in faith and verity." He has passed to the purpose of the conquest. This triumphal procession is no mere display of the victor's power and might—no mere pageant; it has a very definite purpose and object. What is all this continual burning of the incense but the making "manifest the savour of his knowledge in every place"? The Apostle is a captive, that he may bear about the "sweet savour of Christ."

And yet another change of thought. The ever-present thought of his bond-service has come to the surface again. Observe the difference between the fourteenth and fifteenth verses. "And maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge BY US in every place." So runs the fourteenth verse. But the next verse changes the metaphor: "For WE are unto God a sweet savour of Christ."

He is not now the bearer of the censor ; he is himself the incense. There comes over him the thought of his work for his Lord and Master, the sense of responsibility in his commission, and he sees how all connected with his life, his actions, his speech, himself, is to be a proclamation of the grace and power of God. He, in bearing and in character, in contact with his fellow-men, is to be an "epistle of Christ." We look into the future of this man, and we see how his whole life is one long exposition of the grace of God. He stands before the dissolute Felix and pleads his Master's grace, and the force of his belief makes the proud Roman tremble. He is brought before the haughty Agrippa, and his words provoke a sarcasm which thinly veils a heart that has been moved. He pleads in chains before the cruel

Nero, and is acquitted. He reasons with the soldiers of his guard, and the light of the Gospel is carried throughout the whole band of the Emperor's bodyguard. It is "the sweet savour of Christ" among them that are perishing.

What are trials, what are shipwrecks, what is suffering, but part of the great offering up of self upon the altar of bond-service?

It is not here nor there, in this self-chosen spot or that; it is "in every place." This is his life's work, to spend and be spent in his Master's service, to proclaim by every act, by every word, by every look the grace of God. This is the purpose of his capture, to be "in every place, unto God a sweet savour of Christ."

* * * *

Let us now turn to our own case,

and ask ourselves, "What is the purpose of God's conquest over us?"

It is sometimes urged that to become a Christian is a selfish thing. Is there not (so it is asked) a selfish motive in men turning to the service of God? Is not a man most moved when an appeal is made to his self-interest? Now it may be fairly granted that in some cases, either the fear of hell, or the perception of what unsearchable riches the Gospel has to offer, may be an uppermost thought in the mind of a sinner turning from darkness to light; nay, that such an element may be found in all cases, in some more, in some less. But while this may to some extent be conceded, there are two points which such a view disregards. It disregards God's side and God's purpose. Looking back to your own conversion, can you not see now

how there were innumerable little things, little events, all of which were unconsciously leading up to that moment when you saw it all, grace, pardon, help, in Him your Lord? It was the Father drawing you; you knew it not then, but you see it now. This was God's side; but there was His purpose too. It was that you might be a vessel "meet for His use"; it was that in every place you might proclaim His power; it was that you might make manifest His knowledge to all with whom you should come in contact. This was His purpose.

Thus for him who has been called "out of darkness into light" there is a definite path of duty to tread. He is a slave, and all which that word involves. There is nothing that he can call his own—no property, no rights of his own. Yes; we may in all reverence say it,

for him, so far as he is indeed a slave, his Master is responsible. And why is he thus a slave? That his Master's will may be his will; that his Master's wishes may be his too; that what his Master directs he may do. Thus and thus only is he fitted to be a means of the manifestation of the knowledge of God. It is quite true that the Bible is the means of the dissemination of the Gospel message, the storehouse of answers to the problems of life with all its trials, its sorrows, its joys. But all do not, and some will not, read and search within; hence there is an additional way, which in no sense supersedes Scripture, but is constructed on it as a basis, and this way is by the lives of Christian believers, by living epistles. Do you want to see the Master's power in action manifested before your eyes? Go into all stations of life, and you

will find examples without end: the drunkard sobered and reclaimed; the swearer changed into the messenger of glad tidings; the profligate into a useful citizen and a fearer of his Maker. These are the modern miracles, miracles of grace, not isolated, few and far between, but facts of common everyday experience. It is the manifestation again of that power which changed the swearing tinker into the author of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, the licentious profligate into the pious Bishop of Hippo, the persecuting Saul into the Apostle of the Gentiles.

Now another side of thought. We have spoken of the actors in the triumph; let us glance at the onlookers, the watchers. In the great Roman triumph scene, thousands lined the streets, the corners, the roofs, their gaze concentrated upon the captives. They

watch them closely—their bearing; they look to see whether they walk bravely or dejectedly; their every movement is observed.

And is it not the same to-day? The Gospel triumph is watched, ay, and watched closely too; the lives of believers are undergoing the severest scrutiny, the closest examination. Would that we ever recollected this! I see two great classes of onlookers, each gazing, though with different motives. There are first our fellow Christians. These watch, it may be for help, for example, the younger looking to see how the elder act, the weak in faith watching the strong. Oh! the power that one life has upon another! who shall estimate its effect? But these are not the only onlookers; there is the great world around. Here it may be no friendly eye greets us, no

sympathetic look. Can they catch the believer belying his profession? Can they see him trip and fall? Or they may be looking on for the purpose of investigation. Is there any truth in what these Christians say about the power to be found in Christ? If there be, then their lives must show proof of it. And so they look to see if it be so. Oh! the responsibility of the profession of Christianity. Each action of life a message either of attraction or repulsion to the world around. "I care not" (wrote a sceptic to a friend) "for arguments, for treatises, for words in favour of Christianity. I don't believe them; but there is one thing I cannot get over, and that is my sister's life."

A word on the place of service. "We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in

them that perish," writes the Apostle. Christian friend, it is comparatively easy to speak of the Master among "them that are saved." Here we are met with sympathy and response. But it is not only here that the offering up of self in service is to take place. The Christian life is to be no smouldering fire blazing up into flame at intervals ; it is to be the clear shining light, steady and bright at all times, a blessed continuity of attractiveness and light. Yes! for *such* is the grace that can be obtained. The light of Christ must illuminate the living epistles among "them that perish" as well as among "them that are saved." Here it may be there will meet us no sympathy, no encouragement, but rather ridicule and scorn. Yet here it is that the procession of God's triumph must pass by. Such is the lesson of the second sec-

tion, the Purpose of the Conquest. It is a manifesting forth "in every place" of "the unsearchable riches of Christ."

These are days when the busy rush of modern life leaves no time for men to calmly sit down and search for themselves "whether these things be so." Nor is the spirit of the age favourable to such study. Thus more than ever is it necessary that believing Christians should be living epistles "known and read of all men." It is not merely the preacher on the Sunday, the teacher in the school, whose duty it is to declare Christ. To each believer there is given a commission. There is a message here to the man of business. The nineteenth century is an age when dishonesty abounds and petty tricks are rife; days when attractive discounts are sometimes made possible by false tares or deluding weights; days when accounts are

rendered incorrectly because, forsooth, recovery of the wrong is precarious; days when modern science has made it possible to wire some false message which will raise or depress a market, while the guilty sender sweeps into his pocket the hard-earned savings of some poor man or the little all of the widow and the fatherless. As a professing Christian how are you living amidst all this? Here is the spot to let the light shine, to be a sweet savour of Christ "among them that perish." There is a message here also to those whose lives are spent chiefly at home. Are you a head of the house, a master or mistress? How are you letting your light shine among your servants, your employés? Or are you a servant? Is Christianity such a real thing to you that all work is ennobled by it—nothing so menial but that it is by His power made the

doing of His will, the working out of which makes the most menial duty the highest service?

Are you a young man, surrounded by a young man's temptations? Then show that true manliness is to be found in following Him, your Lord, owned and confessed before all.

It is a call, a high call this, to follow where He leads, to speak when He bids, to serve when He commands, to ever be offering heart, soul, will and body on the altar of bond-service.

Friend, have you recognised this call?

III.

THE EFFECT OF THE SERVANT'S WORK.

2 Cor. ii. 16 : “ To the one we are the savour of death unto death ; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things ? ”

STEP by step we have been tracing out the progress of the Gospel triumph. We have seen how our captivity, begun in conversion, was carried on in that consecration of self and self's interests to the will and service of our Conqueror. By us, the captive slaves, the sweet odour of the Gospel message was to be wafted far and wide ; we were to be the bearers of that incense on the path of triumphal procession. And yet more : not only were we to be the bearers—we

were ourselves to be the incense, conveying in word, in action, in movement, yea, in the smallest observable detail of our lives, "a sweet savour of Christ." The slaves were to be at once the messengers and the message. In this verse we pass away from ourselves, our relationship to the Victor, our work and service for Him, to the effect of that work upon the world at large. In the previous chapter we saw how St. Paul, possessed as he was by the eagerness of one to whom his Master and his Master's power was a very real thing, passed from thought to thought with a rapidity which involved his metaphor of the Roman triumph in continual changes. Here we have the final change.

It is still the triumphal procession which he has in view, but the actors in it are different. It was customary

upon these great occasions of rejoicing for the prisoners who were thus led in triumph, or at least some of them, to march as far as the foot of the Capitoline Hill. Here a halt was made, and those who had graced the victors' triumph were led away, and in some dark and gloomy vault were strangled. Thus as the procession wended its way through the streets, made fragrant by the burning incense, there would be a twofold feeling suggested by the smell. To those who had gained the victory it suggested the glad welcome of their fellow citizens, and as street by street was traversed, the thought of favours to be bestowed upon them, of broad lands and possessions to be granted, was prominent. But to the others, the wretched vanquished, each step was but one further advance to an awful end; each smoking altar with

its fragrant smell was but an odour of destruction. That which was to one the suggestion of a life of comfort and of peace was at the same instant to the other a suggestion of gloom and death.

This is the thought which is prominent in the Apostle's mind in this verse. His view has widened. Not now the few captive slaves, the fishermen of Galilee, the slaves of some great man's household, the pious women of some Jewish synagogue—these are not the only captives. No; it is the whole world, men and women of every rank and every class—all are there in that great procession. He is there, too, but not now among the vanquished, but a victor, for he is one of those to whom the incense is a "savour of life unto life." But all are not so. That incense, which to the Apostle is the

preaching of the word of God, is therefore to that great gathering of all who come within its reach of twofold suggestion. To some that word, bright with the glorious promises of a life to come, and of a present endued and enlightened by a mighty power, is a "savour of life unto life"; but to the others, who accept it not, the same proclamation which to the former was so bright is to them "a savour of death unto death."

This is the main lesson of the sixteenth verse—*the effect of the servant's work.*

The Effect of the Servant's Work.

Terribly solemn and heart-searching thought—the effect of a Christian's work! What a testimony to itself the Gospel is in its result! Proclaim it anywhere; lift up the Crucified one to

the eyes of all around you, and watch the result.

There is an instant interest OF SOME SORT among all who hear—an interest of attention or of irritation. There is nothing similar to it to be found. Talk to some one about philosophy, or art, or music, and you will meet with only a *partial* interest. Some will be interested in what you say, but others will show none. Not so the Gospel. Wherever it is mentioned or proclaimed, there is an interest—either a glad and joyful one, or an opposition; ay, even in those who appear most uninterested, there is, if we could see deep enough, some feeling either of longing or of dislike. Proclaim it to the worldling, whose mind and thoughts are fixed on the pleasures of the moment, and see at once the irritation which it produces. Or join in some

group, and ask them the question, "What think ye of Christ?" No matter how appropriate to the moment the question may be, there is an instant revealing of the hearts of those present. The covert sneer, the uneasy look, the attempt to change the conversation, all show the hidden life of each. But commune with a little band of believing disciples, and note at once how the thought of present and future possessions, of a Master loved and known, lights up the face of each. In all ages, in all times, the effect has been the same. How is it? It is that there is a Divine power underlying that proclamation. It is that wheresoever that Gospel is proclaimed, a Divine Spirit is taking of the things of Christ, and showing them to men. Yes, it is that Christ is the test of the human heart.

In old times a certain dark-blue stone was supposed to be a test for gold, and in modern times certain acids actually have that power. Now that which gives them this power is that they attack alloy. Here then is an illustration of how it comes to pass that Christ is the test of the human heart : He attacks alloy.

A man's character may be defined to be what he is. Now what a man is, is determined by what he loves. Something is brought before him, and he loves it. Why does he? Because that something awakens a response in his heart; it has touched some hidden cord which at once vibrates. In other words, he loves that which has some affinity to himself. Therefore, that which he loves determines what he is.

Apply the unerring test : "What

think ye of Christ?" At once a process of examination commences, not always entirely open to observation, yet to some extent apparent. What is it? It is the testing power, which is "Christ crucified," either attacking the alloy or revealing the gold. If the question be addressed to the man of pleasure, then at once his thoughts fly to the things he holds most dear, and he finds that the claims of the Gospel come into opposition with their claims. This is the test attacking alloy. But that very attacking is a revelation, a dragging to light of the existence of that alloy, pleasure, secret sins, or whatever in any particular case it may be; and this, as we have seen, is to declare what that man is in character, in himself. If on the other hand the question is addressed to the believer, at once his thoughts fly to the things

he holds most dear. But these are comprehended in Him who owns him, and thus there is no clashing of claims. The want of opposition is a revelation of the gold, and this is to proclaim such a one to be in union with his Lord. Hence the result of the Gospel proclamation is a dividing, for it reveals into the light of day the thoughts and intents of the hearts of men.

How often we hear it said that it is unjust and wrong to speak of saved and lost, of converted and unconverted! And yet the Gospel is itself a sifter, and though the final judgment must rest with Him who looks deeper than man can see, case after case exists where the presentation of the Light declares at once the lovers of darkness or the dwellers in light. No neutral ground exists in relation to "Him with whom we have to do."

It is a strict "either, or." Of this twofold effect it remains to speak.

"For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish; to the one we are the savour of death unto death, and to the other the savour of life unto life."

What do the expressions mean, "death unto death" and "life unto life"? Take the last first. In order to understand to some extent the Apostle's meaning, we must compare as a commentary our Lord's words in the tenth chapter and tenth verse of St. John's Gospel: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

Here is a twofold aspect, *life* and *life more abundant*. What do we mean by these terms? Go into some one of our large cities, and see the teeming

thousands of the poor, the outcast ; mingle in the groups of those who know not God, save to use His name in some foul curse. Here lift up the Gospel banner, tell of a Saviour who died for them, whose blood can cleanse each stain, who loves them and would call them to Him. On these dry and crumbling bones the Spirit of God breathes, and lo ! here one and there one, a changed man, the drunken and the profligate changed into sober and God-fearing men and women. How is it? This is the result of acceptance, of forgiveness. This is *life*. But it is not only the poor and outcast who can obtain the wondrous gift of life. Here is one who to all appearance lives an honest, upright life, and yet he feels there is something lacking. What is it? It is the calm peace of forgiveness found and realized. But he takes his

stand on the atoning merits of his Lord. That which was hard to do before is now easy, for a new life is his, a life sustained by union with his Master. This is what the Apostle means by life, a living union with Christ to be obtained by the acceptance of Him as the propitiation for our sins, as our surety, as our atonement. Is this life yours? It can be, for He has said, "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out" (John vi. 37). What is that coming? It is the bringing to Christ of self, with no pretensions to righteousness of any sort, in the full consciousness that self has "sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. iii. 23). It is the coming to Him and finding there the pardon of the past, the acceptance now and for the future. In this coming you will find "all things have be-

come new," and this to you will be life, yes, life eternal. But what is life more abundant? How many know what life is, and yet do not know to any real extent what life *more abundant* is!

Here is some poor, sick woman shut out from all the bright world around her, enclosed in some lonely garret, where the pure air of heaven enters tainted and polluted. Draw near and see how that pale face is lit up by some wondrous power. Listen as she tells how easy she has found the long hours of pain to be—easy because He, her life, her all, has shown Himself to her heart by faith. What is this power? It is life more abundant; it is a nearer drawing to, a fuller acceptance of, the life which is Christ Himself.

Are you, friend, situated in some peculiarly trying position, a position

which tends to produce irritation, which tries the temper? Do you find it easy to give way under the pressure of the moment? But do you know what life more abundant is? You will find that He has infinite resources, boundless sympathy; then entrust to His safe keeping that trying position. He will meet its needs, each and all.

Or, is it the daily round of business, with its countless temptations, its endless worries? But are you a believer?—one who has found pardon? Yet why stop here? Pardon is but the step to peace, and peace to power. Then climb those steps: they are but further realizations, further leanings on Him, the great Care-bearer. You will find Him true, and the result will be *life more abundant*. But is your position one that varies in difficulties?—to-day here, to-morrow there, each place

with its own temptations, its own peculiar trials, its own little irritations? Does your life seem, like some frail bark, to be tossed hither and thither by the angry waves of this world's troubles and trials? Then for you, with just these varied trials, these varied temptations, there exists life more abundant. You will find, if you seek it, grace for grace (or, as the original beautifully suggests, grace over against grace) in time of need. On this side grace, and, if tossed to the other side, there will be found grace there too. This is what the Apostle means by life unto life, an ever-advancing series of fresh revelations, fresh draughts at the well of life, until at length we all come to the fulness of life which is the true fulfilment of it all—life in the glory above, in the abiding presence of Him, the great Life Giver.

Do *you* know anything of what "life unto life" means?

Would that we could stop here; but no. The Apostle speaks of "death unto death." Alas! that the same glorious proclamation should be to some an occasion of condemnation! How often we hear the awful phrase, *Gospel hardened!*

The word of God is preached, and it pierces to each heart. Here is one—it may be one who has realized for the first time that the Gospel has a claim upon his life. The light is playing upon him just on that spot where the alloy is. One of two things must happen: either that heart must melt, or (terrible alternative!) it must harden. The man may be much struck by the call; his mind may be much disturbed, thoughts, possibilities, questionings overwhelm him. Now is the

devil's opportunity. "There is something good and true," whispers the Evil One, "in all that you have heard. It is so weighty that you must think over it. Do not decide in a hurry." And so for that time the call is disregarded. Again and again the call comes, and again and again put off, each time easier than the last. Years, it may be, roll by, opportunities become fewer and fewer, till at length conscience is lulled to sleep, and the voice of the pleader silenced. This is what the Apostle means by "death unto death." Such a one began being "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. ii. 1), and each rejection was one more seal on the reality of that death, and the end must be the second death: it was "death unto death."

* * * *

If such be the effect of the servants'

work, "Who is sufficient for these things?" I hear the voice of ONE who says, "My grace is sufficient for thee : for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. xii. 9), and I hear the Apostle handing on the message which he himself had proved true in the words, "God is able to make *all* grace abound toward you ; that ye, *always* having *all* sufficiency in *all* things, may abound to *every* good work" (2 Cor. ix. 8).

Yes, the Master is sufficient.

Is it the first step you hesitate to take—the coming out upon the victor's side? Then behold in Him the Crucified, sufficient merits, a full and perfect atonement, a perfect safety.

Is it the letting go of some cherished idol, the fuller consecration of life and life's concerns? Then "He is able to give thee much more than this"

(2 Chron. xxv. 9) ; yes, even this choice possession, which you freely surrender to Him and for Him.

Is it the difficulty and responsibility of service? Recollect that you can do all things through "Christ, which strengtheneth you," and "cast all your care upon Him, for He careth for you" (1 Pet. v. 7).

The Lord Himself, your peace, your hope, your perfect satisfaction, is the secret of your everlasting triumph.





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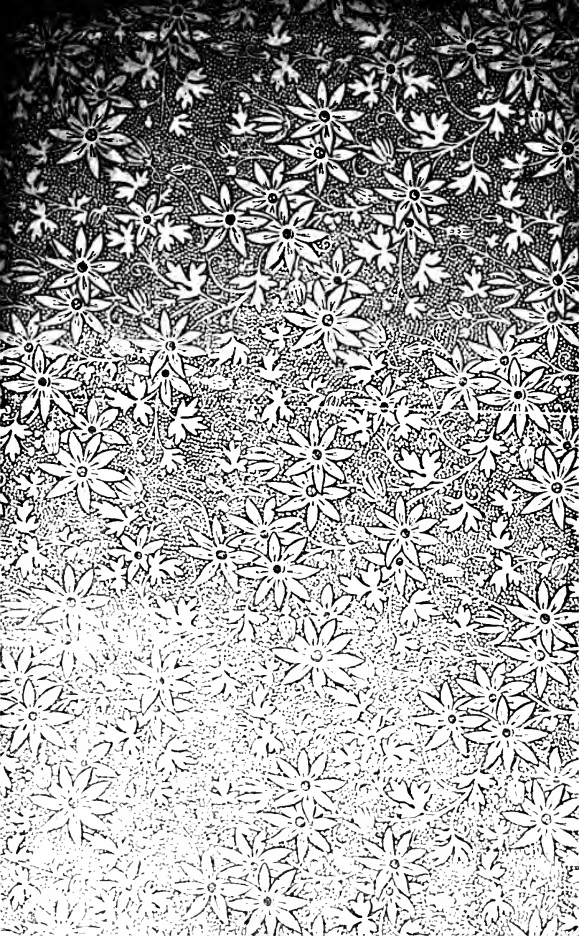
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